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Governor signs Sen. Kuipers' alternative-energy legislation

LANSING — Sen. Wayne Kuipers' proposal to promote the use of alternative energy while strengthening Michigan's agricultural industry has been signed into law by the governor.

Public Act 269 of 2006 requires the Michigan Department of Management and Budget to expand alternative fueling ability at state transportation facilities by Jan. 1, 2007. The fuel to be used would be blended with fuel derived from agricultural crops grown in Michigan that include corn and switchgrass.

"As gas prices continue to climb, the need for our state to encourage alternate energy sources becomes even more obvious," said Kuipers, R-Holland. "By supporting fuels made from locally grown crops, we make our nation more energy independent and create new markets for Michigan agricultural products."

Kuipers' bill helps promote use of E85, a fuel blend that is 85 percent ethanol, and biodiesel, which contains at least 5 percent diesel fuel derived from crops. Other bills in the bipartisan package require that the state fleet use alternative-fuel vehicles.

Although GM and Ford are heavily investing in the production of E85 vehicles, there are four pumps dispensing the fuel in Michigan, while Minnesota has 198 pumps and Illinois has 104 pumps state wide.

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